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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2015

ECLC Honors Short Hills' Trustee for Creating Popular High School Program

CHATHAM – Like chocolate and peanut butter, it was a popular pairing right from the start! More than 1,000 students from Millburn High School and ECLC of New Jersey's school for children with special needs have been paired up through an evening recreational program, thanks in part to the inspiration of Judy Greenblatt of Short Hills.

There are many clubs for students to join at Millburn High, but among the most popular is P.A.I.R.S. (for Partners in Afterschool Inclusive Recreation for Special Needs), which started with help from Greenblatt, when her sons attended the school.

Greenblatt was instrumental in launching and sustaining the club in its early years. She even got certified as a Substitute Teacher and became the club's official advisor, which allowed her to help with behind-the-scenes legwork and organizing students.

To celebrate the club's 10th anniversary, Greenblatt was honored by her fellow ECLC trustees at the nonprofit's annual Board dinner on May 27. ECLC Executive Director, Bruce Litinger, attested to her important role in starting P.A.I.R.S., and the club's impact during the past decade. "Many ECLC grads have mentioned the P.A.I.R.S. Club in their graduation speeches as one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences they had at ECLC," said Litinger. "Judy works hard and tirelessly when she commits to something and doesn't expect anything from anyone that she won't do herself."

The P.A.I.R.S. Club is active for several weeks in the Fall and Spring, when students from Millburn High spend evenings at ECLC's school in Chatham. The youngsters shoot baskets in the gym, teach arts and crafts, compete at board games, bingo or cards, munch on snacks, and, more or less, just hang out with ECLC students.

Litinger noted P.A.I.R.S. offers a rare opportunity for ECLC students to be completely immersed with -- and respected by -- their "typical" peers. And, it's a unique experience for many of the Millburn teen-agers, greatly raising their awareness, understanding -- and respect -- for people with disabilities. It has even inspired some of them to enter the field of special needs as a career choice.

Since its inception, P.A.I.R.S. has engaged more than 700 Millburn High School students and some 400 students from ECLC. In 2008, the program won an Innovations Award from the New Jersey School Boards Association and ASAH, the umbrella organization representing some 130 special-needs school agencies across the state.

About ECLC

Established in 1970, ECLC of New Jersey is an accredited, nonprofit offering "Education, Careers and Lifelong Community" to children and adults with special needs, including those diagnosed with autism, Down syndrome and severe learning and/or language disabilities. ECLC runs schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus educating some 300 students, from ages 5-21. ECLC graduates can enter the P.R.I.D.E. adult centers in Florham Park or Paramus, or get find a job in their community through ECLC's employment affiliate, Community Personnel Services, based in Chatham. Learn more about ECLC at www.eclcofnj.org.